

## THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

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## ARE OUR NEWSPAPERS NEWSPAPERS?

HERE lie before us the last issues to hand of village weekly newspapers, town weeklies, and city dailies, from various parts of Canada. We are fairly warranted in regarding these copies as average specimens of the issues from the respective newspaper offices throughout the year. And it is matter of congratulation for us, in this young country, that our average village, town, or city newspaper is, on the whole, a sheet, be it little or great, of decent morality, average intelligence, and creditable enterprise, according to circumstances. With a fair acquaintance with the newspaper press of Britain and America, we are not afraid to say that our Canadian newspaper Press can suffer nothing, in the points noted above, in comparison with the Press of older, wealthier, and better educated lands.

It is our appreciation of our local and metropolitan Press, and our desire to see greater perfection reached, that impel us to call attention to a very serious defect in the editorial management of these papers, with only few exceptions, a defect, indeed, that considerably imperils their claim to be, in any true and proper sense of the word, entitled to be called complete newspapers.

What is a newspaper? It is not a very far-fetched conceit that derives the word *news* from the initial letters of the words that denote the four cardinal points N(orth), E(ast), W(est), and S(outh).

"Whence *news* doth come, if any would discuss,  
The letters of the word resolve it thus,  
News is conveyed by letter, word, or mouth,  
And comes from North, East, West, or South."

We find, in accordance with the above epigram, that, in one of our leading dictionaries, a newspaper is described as being, "A sheet of paper printed and published at stated intervals for conveying intelligence of passing events." While we demur to Worcester, as in the above definition, confining the mission of the newspaper to merely *chronicling* the events of the day, without *commenting* on them, yet, even on this low platform, the claims of many sheets now on our table to be called veritable newspapers might well be challenged; and, indeed, for the good of our political and secular Press, ought in all plainness of speech, to be loudly and persistently challenged till amendment be made in the needed direction.

The *historian*, the *newser*, and the *seer* are brethren in office. The historian records the events already past; the newser paints events going on at the present time; while the seer unfolds events to come. Now we are pretty sure that a historian who wrote the history of England, and left out Scotland, and took no account of John Knox and his principles, or who wrote the history of the United States and took no account of the Puritanism of New England, would be discredited as not up to his business. Would such a history not be compared to the tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, with Hamlet left out? And open to the same censure would be the painter who took great delight and pains in depicting the boots, begrimed with mud, of those who sat for their

pictures, and who, at the same time, persistently ignored the face as of little consequence. Whatever Chinese, who think so much of people's feet, would say, an intelligent critic would bring in the verdict of deficient or monstrous art. In vain would the painter maintain that boots are an important appendage of his man, and that the boots of his pictures were done with realistic faithfulness. That may be true, might his censor reply, but faces are before feet, and it were better to do the eyes justice than the boots, if justice cannot be done to both. But if the artist could shew that it paid him better to pay attention to boots, mud, and all, as there was a rage for that kind of art, then, while it might be admitted that the artist was a thrifty tradesman, wise in cultivating what paid best, it could not, with a serious face, be maintained that these pictures were true art, or that the maker of them was true to nature and his great mission.

Now let us imagine that by some occult agency a week's issue of the political Press of this Province was wafted to some remote star for the perusal of its angelic inhabitants, who had expressed a desire to know what was going on among us on this ambitious little planet. On opening paper after paper the starry readers find each one, according to its ability and size, professing to give an epitome of the world's news for a day or a week as the case may be. Let us suppose then that the angelic readers had got over the advertisements, the short telegrams, and the news items, then what next? Well here are some columns taken up with a serial love story. Then there is a page devoted to chess, sports, and amusements. Editorials come next, bristling with epithets and adjectives, nearly all about something the editors term "the N. P." There are columns of humour, columns of fashion, of frivolities, and also of solid facts, from the child that fell out of its cradle and broke its nose to the railway collision, or the shipwreck. Then day after day, and week after week, supposing these angelic beings are content to receive a weekly mail, comes the long, horrible, varied, unblushing record of suicide, murder, and adultery, heightened occasionally by the sickening details of some trial for abortion or seduction.

Now, after reading through, from beginning to end, the reader, be he on earth or in the stars, will be forced to admit two things, that the lower extremities of society—its boots—are rather dirty and unsightly objects, and that our newspapers, in portraying the fashion of the hour, devote themselves with extraordinary faithfulness to the painting of society's boots, mud and all. But in modern society no nobler parts? Where is its head, and where its divine eye? Is Christianity a fact? Has the Lord Jesus Christ lived and died in this world? Are His people, His doctrine, and His principles to any extent here? Are there Christian Churches? Are they doing any good? Has their Master promised to be with them. Is that promise fulfilled? Facts are facts; and facts about the head and face are, at least, as good as facts about the feet and boots. There are societies at work whose aim is to cover our Dominion with colporteurs and good books. Year by year our various denominations issue the minutes of their conferences and their annual reports of mission work. There are heroic men treading in the footsteps of their Master, who are teaching and preaching or organizing for God in the slums of the large cities, under the sun of India, amid the darkness of Africa, out on our own prairies, and deep in our backwoods. Why not abridge the details of the horrible evidence in that seduction and abortion case to make room for the adventures of some bold missionary in the cause of humanity? Why not give, say, one-tenth of the space that was lately given to Hanlan to such men as Dr. Blaikie to tell people of the present position of the Waldensian Church, and Dr. Mitchell, who knows more about India than any man living since Dr. Duff left us, to tell of the marks of the coming dawn in that ancient land.

When we find our Press giving, at least, equal space and attention to the progress of Christianity that it gives to the progress of gambling and boating, when we find recorded, in at least equal space, the sayings and doings of good men as the sayings and doings of bad men, then will we be forced to acknowledge that there is some approach to true realistic painting of the times. But more than this the Press of a Christian country ought to be. "The question," says Mr. Hughes, M.P., who is now on a visit to this continent, "that goes to the root of all problems of civilization, of all problems of human life is 'what

think ye of Christ?' The time is upon us when that question must be answered and can no longer be thrust aside, while we go, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. Upon the answer depends our future—whether we shall flounder on under the weight of increasing riches till our vaunted civilization has brought us to utter anarchy, or whether we shall rise up in new strength, casting out the spirit of mammon in the name that broke in pieces the Roman empire and founded Christianity on the ruins." There have been noble war cries in the past that have led to great issues. Let this, therefore, be one of the cries for the future, "A Christian Press for a Christian people."

## BAPTIZED INFANTS.

AS it is not improbable that the indistinct views regarding baptism, which perplex "Inquirer," may be shared by others, we think it not amiss to give an answer to his questions, which appeared in our number of August 27th.

1. All baptized infants are not in a state of grace. It is "Inquirer's" fundamental error to suppose that baptism has anything to do with conferring salvation, or that salvation is a necessary adjunct of baptism. Ritualists may teach baptismal regeneration, that baptism *oper operato* makes the baptized person "a Christian, a child of God, an heir of heaven," and puts him within the sphere of saving grace, but the Scriptures teach that union to Christ, by faith and the Holy Spirit, alone saves. Unless, therefore, a baptized child has faith, and partakes of the life-giving Spirit of God, he is not in a state of saving grace. Further, a man by faith comes into a state of saving grace, antecedent to and irrespective of baptism. Quakers, who are not baptized, may undoubtedly be saved persons.

2. There is no reason for baptizing an adult that does not apply to an infant, and none for baptizing an infant that does not apply to an adult. Both are to be baptized for the same reasons, which may be thus stated. (1) Baptism "signifies and seals our engrafting into Christ and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace and our engagement to be the Lord's." Baptism, therefore, is a *sign* and *seal* of God's grace bestowed in Christ, and of the covenant made with us in Him. As such it is administered to both adults and infants. But the sign and seal may be put upon a person who is not a believer, in the sense of being in a state of grace, as in the case of Simon Magus. For baptism is made a means of salvation "only by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive" it. This is true alike of the adult and the infant. Without faith baptism is not effectual to salvation. (2) Baptism is to be administered not because a man or an infant is in a state of saving grace; but because there is in the case of both "a profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him." The only difference is that while an adult makes profession for himself, the profession is made by the parent for the infant. But a sincere parent (and everyone is to be dealt with as if sincere) is not only himself in covenant, but the covenant is with his children also (Acts ii. 39), such infants are of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xix. 14). They are not unclean but holy (1 Cor. vii. 14), and thus have a right to the sign and seal of the covenant. The "house" of the believer is to be baptized, that is the family (Acts xvi. 31). But the "house" includes the little ones, even infants of eight days old (Genesis xvii. 9 *et seq.* compared with Gal. iii. 9-29). Further, if parents fulfil the covenant on their part God has promised to bestow on their offspring covenant blessings (Gen. xviii. 19; Eph. vi. 1-4). Hence baptism is a sign and seal of salvation bestowed by God in terms of His covenant in Christ Jesus, that is to say, where there are faith and obedience.

3. A Presbyterian minister may administer baptism to the child of any professing Christian, no matter to what denomination he belongs. But ordinarily it is not for edification when a man is within reach of the Church with which he is connected, to administer sealing ordinances without the knowledge and consent of that Church. This is a matter of Christian order and courtesy, the neglect of which would lead to confusion and bad feeling among the Churches. A Presbyterian minister does not baptize the infants of those who belong to no Church, because such persons are not *professing* Christians. A man may be a Christian, but that does not entitle him to recognition by baptism as a member of the *visible* Church.